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No dilution^{ur} of dowry law: NCW

New Delhi: The National Commission for Women (NCW) has dug in its heels and ruled out any amendments in section 498A of the Indian Penal Code. Instead, the commission has issued advisories to states asking local police personnel to arrest the accused husband and his relatives only after thorough investigation and counselling.

The NCW has issued advisories to states asking police to initiate preliminary probe and counselling before arresting husband on a complaint. Its move came at a time when certain organisations are seeking the dilution of IPC section 498A to stop its misuse by women to harass spouses

The move comes at a time when the law is under attack from certain organisations for its "misuse" and has even prompted the women and child development (WCD) ministry to consider reviewing it. In its advisory to states, the com-

mission recommended that in all women-centric laws, including domestic violence, Dowry Prohibition Act 1961 and 498A, a cautious approach be taken. "In case of complaints, a preliminary investigation must be conducted by the police and if necessary, counselling done to save the marriage," NCW chairperson Girija Vyas said. She added that counselling must be conducted by NGOs and social workers.

In making her point, Vyas said that crime against women had increased. Statistics recorded by the NCW showed that harassment for dowry had increased from 1,556 cases in 2005 to 2,767 cases in 2007. The commission has also initiated a pilot project with the Delhi Police's crime against women cell by providing professionally trained counsellors for couples. The counsellors will also sensitise police officials on issues like marital discord. The NCW reiterated its demand for amendments to the Dowry Prohibition Act 1961. It suggested that the term giving or taking dowry "in connection with marriage" should be dropped as it was being interpreted in a very narrow sense. TNN